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DEATH OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

BY

S. G. W. BENJAMIN.



BOSTON:
WILLIAM V. SPENCER,
134, WASHINGTON STREET.
1865.

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The first draught of these lines appeared in the “New-York Independent.” As they may respond, in a slight degree, to the popular sentiment at this time, a few copies have been issued in the present form, with some changes and additions.



“ With a noble nature and great gifts
Was he endowed, — courage, discretion, wit,
An equal temper and an ample soul,
Rock-bound and fortified against assaults
Of transitory passion, but below
Built on a surging subterranean fire
That stirred and lifted him to high attempts.
Wherefore with honor lay him in his grave.”

PHILIP VAN ARTAVELDE.



O D E.

I.

LET the nation weep,
As they bear the martyr
To his last, long sleep !

II.

Ay, let the nation weep !
Another such as he
We never more shall see
This side eternity.

III.

Ay, let the nation weep !
And let the slow bells toll
For the noblest soul

That ever dwelt in man,
 Or ever led the van
 Of Freedom's hosts to victory,
 And rang the charge of Liberty !

IV.

Well may the nation weep,
 And shudder at the stroke
 That all their slumbering wrath awoke.
 O wretch accurst, whose impious hand could dare
 To smite the leader of the people's choice,
 Or seek to harm a single hair
 Of him whose heart, whose hand, whose voice,
 Were all employed to work the people's good,
 And stop the flow of fratricidal blood !
 And O, ye modern Pharaohs, ye whose gold
 Was gathered by the souls ye bred and bought and
 sold, —
 Ye, that, heedless of the warning signs of God,

Sought to bring again the Iron age,
 To imbrute the human body, and to cage
 The soaring spirit of mankind !
 Your hearts were stone, your eyes were blind,
 And ye defied
 The Almighty in your pride !
 We ask no more, — we know that God is just ;
 Only let not the sword of Justice rust ;
 We ask no more, — the bolt that hurled
 Our country's saviour to the dust
 Made you a mockery and a byword to the world !

V.

And him, the good, the great,
 Crowned by a martyr's fate,
 What words can fitly utter forth
 His manly virtues and his worth ?
 Perchance he did not seem
 So great to those who deem

A traitor or a Nero
May be a glorious hero,
If he but wear a classic face,
Or ape the superficial grace
That marks the scion of a titled race.
Not such was he for whom we mourn ;
Of gentle blood he was not born,
Nor heir to patrimonial lands
Tilled by the bondman's unrequited hands.
He inherited a heart,
As an infant's, void of art ;
Yet imbued with a Titanic might,
In his hate of wrong, his love of right :
His was the celestial beauty
Of a soul that does its duty.
Noble patriot, husband, father,
He did not seek to gather
The laurels of a wild ambition,
That only yield a vain fruition.
To benefit mankind, — this was his aim ;

To labor and to live unstained with blame :

He died without a blot upon his name.

Let a requiem sublime

Ascend from every clime !

Let the weary and oppressed,

From north and south, from east and west,

For whom his great heart yearned,

For whom his spirit burned,

To give their sufferings rest, —

Let all arise with lamentation,

And, with his own beloved nation,

Bequeath the fame

Of LINCOLN'S name —

A heritage for veneration —

To the remotest generation !

VI.

Ay, let the nation weep,

While the slow bells toll,

And the cannon roll,
For the funeral knoll
Of his mighty soul !
Ye cannot break the slumber deep
That wraps his limbs in quiet sleep ;
He cannot hear
The crowds that tread
Around his bier,
Nor see the tears they shed ;
For he nevermore shall dwell
With the people that he loved so well.
Let the nation's sorrow have its way
For him who was the nation's stay !

VII.

Our hearts are sad, our eyes are dim ;
We hoped long years of rest for him,
To enjoy the peace for which he wrought, —
The peace with his own life-blood bought.

But he has rest
Among the blest,
And with the Christ he loved.
Enough ! his work was done ;
The victor's crown was won ;
And God himself removed
The patriot-martyr to his home.
Enough ! his task was done ;
For us remains to guard his tomb,
To bid the willow wave
Around the sacred grave
Of him who loosed the slave,
And weave the fame
Of LINCOLN's name
With WASHINGTON's renown, —
Twin stars of glory,
Unfading in our nation's story.

VIII.

His work is done ;

Our work is scarce begun :

'Tis ours to keep the nation that was saved

By his untiring zeal and earnest toil,

And by the valor of the hosts that braved

The cannon's shot, and sleep beneath the soil ;

'Tis ours to plant the school, to teach the rising
youth

Of every hue, in every hamlet of the South ;

To instruct and elevate the public mind,

And show the last-discovered problem to mankind,

That Reason's sway outlives the tyrant's power,

That Liberty gives strength, and might makes right
no more.

No longer let the demagogue with bribes,

With brazen face and lying diatribes,

Juggle votes from every facile fool

Whose unlettered brain becomes the tool
For schemes of avarice and misrule.
Let loftier motives than the love of self,
The greed for gold, for place, for power and pelf,
Direct the people to their truest gain.
Hasten the years when all who vote can read,
When all refuse their ignorance to plead,
And hate of evil is the universal creed.
So shall we honor best the hallowed graves
Upon a hundred fields of battle, where the waves
Of treason dashed against our ship of state,
Dashed with crimson foam, but dashed in vain ;
So shall we heed the warning voice of him
Whose name, unsullied by the hand of Fate,
Shall be a household word in every clime
When kings are obsolete, when diadems grow dim,
And empires, palsy-stricken, plunge adown the
abyss of time.

IX.

Let his monument arise,
 Pointing upward to the skies,
 Founded by a nation's heart,
 Grandly shaped in every part
 By the master-minds of art,
 And consecrated by a nation's tears,
 To teach throughout the after-time,
 To every tribe, in every clime,
 That toil for others is sublime.
 Immortal Patriot ! through the mist of years
 That in the future are to come, —
 When we who saw thee here are gone, —
 We view thy heaven-aspiring tomb
 Illumined by the roseate dawn
 Of the millennial day,
 When Peace shall hold her sway,
 And bring Saturnian eras ; when the roar

O' the battle's thunder shall be heard no more ;
When Liberty and Truth shall reign for evermore,
From Oregon to Florida's perpetual May,
From Shasta's awful peak to Massachusetts Bay, —
Then our children's children, by the cottage door,
In the schoolroom, from the pulpit, at the bar,
Shall look up to thee as to a beacon star,
And deduce the lesson from thy life and death,
That the patriot's lofty courage and the Christian's
 faith
Conquer honors that outweigh Ambition's gaudiest
 prize,
Triumph o'er the grave, and open the gates of Para-
 dise.











